2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

came to the village and in accommodating strangers while he was away. He told them that disputes were to be referred to the headman immediately. Turning to the new headman he said he had to report anything unusual that occurred in the village, and that he was authorized to arbitrate in small cases in his and surrounding villages.

Kawinga then left the centre of the crowd and went back to where he had been sitting. Then an officiating headman, addressing particularly the women, said, 'Only a few months ago there was a quarrel between the present chief and his elder sisters. These women ran away to Malemia's area in Zomba district without reporting the matter to anyone. This must stop. With effect from to-day any troubles must be brought to the headman without delay: he will settle them. A tree cannot grow without branches and a headman or a chief cannot be known without his people's respect. Do not behave as children. This man cannot do things alone: he must have your help. We leave him in your hands and we do not want to hear about any more trouble. Follow all the instructions the chief has given you.' He took his leave and Nyenje was taken back inside the hut. The people now dispersed to where there was beer and dancing.

The Structural Reincarnation of Village Headmen and Perpetual Relationships

There appear to be a number of significant aspects of the installation ceremonies. First, there is the ritual death and rebirth of the village headman. The heir is 'killed' by a blow with the fist on the forehead, but is reborn the headman. The Yao do not believe that the spirit of the headman is inherited by the heir;[1] he has only eaten the name.[2] But socially he is born again and, logically consistent with this idea, he takes the wives of his predecessor without further marriage negotiation. He also takes over the property of the dead man, his clothes and his huts.

But this structural reincarnation of the headman has the important implication that the headman is immortal. He shares this characteristic with the group of which he is the leader. When

[1] As the Bemba do. A. I. Richards, 'Mother-right among the Central Bantu' in E. E. Evans-Pritchard and others, *Essays Presented to C. G. Seligman*, Kegan Paul (London, 1933).

[2] *Kulya lina* is a synonym for succeeding to headmanship.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

'sisters' and 'mothers' because alternate generations are merged in kinship terminology and in behaviour. A man's sister's daughter, for example, is called 'mother', and her daughter (his granddaughter) in turn becomes 'sister'. A woman calls her male matrilineal descendants 'children' (*mwanangu*), or 'grandchildren' (*yisikulu*); her matrilineal male progenitors 'mother's brother' (*akwelume*), or 'brother' (*alumbwangu*).[1] By extension, therefore, another way of expressing common matrilineal descent is to say that two people are the children of one person, *wanakajumo*, even though that person may be their great-grandmother. A term which is almost synonymous with this is *mucitumbu cimo*, 'in one womb', used as 'we were conceived in one womb', though once again the reference may be to a common grandmother. But the inclusiveness of these terms varies in different contexts. Any may refer to the matrilineage of maximal span within the village, or to a section of the matrilineage seen as a segmented organization of parts. It is only by reference to the particular ancestress that the range of the term may be determined.

The Unity of the Matrilineage

A person identifies himself most closely with the members of his matrilineage from whom he expects most help and whom he, in turn, is expected to help. If he is called upon to pay a heavy fine it will be the members of his own matrilineage who will club together to find sufficient money. They, more than others, support him in his quarrels. They come to his aid when he is ill or injured, by consulting the diviner and trying to find the sorcerer who is causing his illness, and by finding medicines which will bring him back to good health. They send him money if he has left the country and needs it to return. The goods he brings home from the labour centres will be shared mostly among his matrilineal relatives. They will find the food to be used at his funeral and also see that his burial is properly carried out. He owes these duties in turn to them. His property will stay almost entirely within the matrilineage after his death.

Relationship, unless qualified, is looked upon as being entirely matrilineal. This is well illustrated by the beliefs about the

[1] She most commonly addresses them as *acimwemi*. See p. 147.

3:Stanonus D-5 (ca. 1912) 1922 FT? Yao FT?

generous and popular, the donations may mount up to a useful sum. Dancing goes on late into the afternoon when all return to the village.

The man may not speak to his guardian again until after the birth of the child. The two women guardians, the *nkamwai* and the *nahenga*, as a rule cease sexual intercourse with their husbands during the same period or, at all events, during the last month before the birth of the child.

The child born of a woman who has not gone through *Lôlwe* is buried alive.

Chieftainship. The Yao when they migrated to their present country were headed by a number of their chiefs. These eventually settled in different areas adjacent to one another, each ruling over a considerable tract of country. The *chief* was supported by a number of headmen, each of whom looked after a village; the chiefs and headmen in turn being assisted by the village elders.

Often among a *chief's* counselors one found a number of his relatives, and sons and brothers were often made headmen. A man assuming chieftainship often had to dispose of a brother of whom he was afraid.

Chieftainship is hereditary, the chief's name being passed on to each successor. Succession is to eldest son of the eldest sister or a son of some other sister. Failing these, it passes to a grand-nephew. If there is no acceptable adult nephew, a full brother may succeed.

Macdonald's account of the Malenya's succession[1] is, I believe, incorrect. The old Malenya (Nalutumbo) was succeeded according to custom by his nephew, Kambwia who, as Malenya, was called Ndalama. Kuntaja was not a younger brother of Nalutumbo or Kambwia, but a cousin of the latter. Ndalama was succeeded by a nephew, not the eldest but the second son of a sister, the eldest having already succeeded to the chieftainship of Kuntaja was therefore ineligible. The present Malenya will be succeeded by a grand-nephew, the son of a daughter of his eldest sister, his sister having no sons.

A successor inherited all the wives and slaves of the deceased chief and all his goods and chattels, guns, ivory and gardens. Any small possessions might be divided among the deceased's children and in the case of guns, those who had always used them often laid claims not to be separated from their weapons; these claims were often allowed by the new chief.

In the same way, any ordinary man's successor is his nephew, the son of a sister, who inherits all goods and chattels and slave wives, but not free-born wives, nor gardens, which go to the free wives. Stock is generally divided among the children.

Before 1891, when a British Protectorate was formally declared over Nyasaland, each chief ruled supreme. He was consulted as to the dates for *Unyago*; he directed the harvesting, etc.; he proclaimed war and generally was paramount among his people. It will be seen, therefore, that he was a busy man, but he received no direct remuneration. His wealth consisted of slaves and ivory. Slaves he obtained in warfare and as blood money,

[1] Op. cit., vol. i, p. 186.

601 In Table II, the relationships mentioned in Column 1 are defined in Columns 2-8.

Thus a brother (*of* (*a*)) is, *inter alia*, the son of (*a*)'s father's brother (Column 3), the husband of the daughter of (*a*)'s father's sister (Column 4), and so on (see Table II).

Before the tables can be fully intelligible, however, a brief explanation of terms having no English equivalent is necessary :—

(*a*) *Akwepo* and *Akwaa* are terms exclusively given to relations by marriage.

Akwaa is a brother or sister by marriage—it is not advisable to use the terms "brother-in-law" or "sister-in-law" as they are too circumscribed.

Akwepo has not even an approximate equivalent in English owing to the diversity of relationships included (*e.g.*, wife's mother and great-grand-daughter's husband).

Meidumi is a special term given to the children of a paternal aunt or maternal uncle, to distinguish them from those of a paternal uncle or maternal aunt.

[582] *Meidumi* are not only allowed to marry but are encouraged to do so.

Akwilomo is used only for a maternal uncle, and *chipwa* is the reciprocative term for a sister's son.

The use of inverted commas with English terms (*e.g.*, "brother") indicates that the person is regarded by the Yao as being of the same relation to him as the term usually signifies in English. Thus a Yao regards the son of his maternal aunt, for instance, as being exactly the same relation as his own brother (by the same parents); this relationship is indicated as "brother."

601 498 *Succession.* The common rule of discriminating between the children of a brother and sister and those of two brothers or of two sisters is present here, and is combined with the equally common one of succession to the sister's son.

The rule of succession is, strictly speaking, to the eldest son of the eldest sister. If, however, a man and his advisers consider him to be unsuitable, or in event of his death, the succession passes to the following in order of precedence : younger son of the eldest sister, younger son of a younger sister, and son of own daughter.

Only by general consent can the succession pass elsewhere, but it not infrequently happens that intrigue procures the death of all the legal heirs of a wealthy or powerful man. In such cases, but only by general consent, the succession may pass to a brother (by the same mother), any "son," or even to a powerful vassal; it is often felt that a wealthy or influential man is likely to conduce to the peace and welfare of the country rather as the chief, than as a probably turbulent vassal of a man whose succession is apt to be controversial. On the death of such a man, however, matters are often in a state of chaos owing to the multitude of claimants, the members of the two families; I have known two such cases. A man, also, who

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knows that he is not legally justified in "entering into the name" is loath to do so, as he knows that he is not expected to make a successful chief. The defeat of Salimu, the fifth Makanjila, by the British in 1893 was, and still is, ascribed to the fact that he belonged to the male line.

The term *chipwa* (*mwipwaguwo*, "his *chipwa*") may be used for any child of a sister. A female title (common amongst the Yaos) descends to the eldest daughter of the eldest son of the bearer of the title.

Marriage.- Relatives who are forbidden to marry are called *achidawalo*; they include all those given in the table except *asidani*, *achiwesukulu* ("grandchildren"), and the wife of the maternal uncle. An heir, on succeeding, may marry the wife or wives of his maternal uncle, but not if he has previously married one of his daughters.

It is legal, though rare, for a man to marry the daughter of his own child (*chisukulu*).

"*Brothers*" *and* "*Sisters.*"—The term *ulongo* is used to describe an exogamous clan, and the members are known as *mlongo* (singular)—*achalongo* or *wa chilongo*, collectively. This word *mlongo* is probably a corruption of *wa ulongo* ("in the clan") as it requires the use of the term *mjakwe* (*ajao*) "a companion," instead of the possessive pronoun. Thus *mlongo mjakwe* (*wchilongo wajao*), "his (their) clan relatives" (instead of *mlongo jwakwe*, *wchalongo wawo*).

There is no general term corresponding to the English "brother." The nearest is *mlumbu*, which describes the relationship between a "brother" and a "sister," it is rarely used by women, however.

The elder "brother" of a man is called *akulu* or *achimwene*. These terms are used for all sons of a father's elder "brother" or of a mother's elder "sister," and for the elder brother by the same parents. They are also used by a woman for any "brothers," elder or younger, senior or junior, in preference to the term *mlumbu*.

Mpwanga is used for a son of a father's younger "brother" or of a mother's younger "sister," and for a younger brother by the same parents. It is used by a woman for her "sisters" in exactly the same way, but is never used by a woman of a man.

A man calls his "sister" *chemwali*, collectively, *mwanjawo chemwali*; a girl refers to an elder, or senior "sister," by means of the same term; a man refers to a "sister" as *mlumbwangu* or as *chemwali*.

The term *chisukulu* is used for a "grandchild" (*mwisukuluwangu*, "my 'grandchild'").

"*Father*" *and* "*Mother.*"—A paternal aunt is distinguished as *atati wakongwe* ("female father") if necessary, though she is, of course, not addressed as such. The elder brother of a father is referred to as *atati wakulungwe* ("the great father"), his younger brother as *atati wanandi* ("the little father"). Other *achatati* are similarly distinguished.

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It is becoming increasingly evident, however, that the law of succession is being avoided, not by extension of the number of marriageable relatives, but by laxity in the observance of the law itself. Nowadays the legal heir is never quite sure of his position, though, as a matter of fact, there is not now much competition for a position which, under European rule, is often exacting and yet unprofitable.

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Moreover, owing to the abrogation of the drastic native laws regulating the sanctity of the marriage tie, marriages are becoming increasingly temporary in character. This is reflected in the system of relationship, as the relatives by marriage are becoming equally temporary.